

Letters to the Editor

Letter unfairly portrayed Hurskainen's role as a goalkeeper

Dear Editor,

I appreciate your input and clarification concerning the letter Ben F. sent in barraging Lassi Hurskainen. I agree that it is important that *The Blue Banner* remain an open forum for opinions, harsh or otherwise, when addressing campus issues, including athletics.

I would therefore like to offer mine as both a student athlete and member of the UNC Asheville community in rebuttal to Ben F.'s claims and hopefully alleviate some of his "concerns."

First, from a purely athletic perspective, I would like to address some fallacious grievances concerning Lassi's athletic performance. I am a goalkeeper on the women's soccer team, obviously well-acquainted with Lassi's goalkeeping position. Ben F.'s claim that Lassi "loses his composure and begins yelling at the defense" when they are down a goal is poorly misrepresented. This is an understandable mistake for someone who is unacquainted with the position, so

allow me to clarify.

As a goalkeeper, you have a great advantage in that you can see the entire field, whereas your teammates cannot, given their respective positions on the field. With that advantage comes a responsibility to communicate what you see to your field players.

I have always said that strong communication from a goalkeeper can prevent at least half the shots that would have occurred from occurring. I am therefore expected to yell at my defense to make sure they see what I see, and should they make a mistake, it is also my job to address it and suggest how to correct it; being down a goal only makes communication more vital.

We do not mindlessly yell at field players or attempt to bring their spirits down.

On the contrary, had Ben F. taken the time to ask a field player what they thought a goalkeeper's responsibilities to their field players are, he would find that strong communication was among them.

Another concern of Ben F.'s I

wish to address is Lassi's work ethic. In addition to having team practice every day, we have keeper training twice a week as well, meaning he dedicates more time during the week to his sport than the already demanding average. I have watched Lassi at keeper training, and stating that "if his work ethic would step up he could get to a competitive level" is a ludicrous assumption. As a goalkeeper, I can certainly gauge the level of difficulty that he handles, finding both level of difficulty and constant level of intensity impressive.

Now that I have clarified some misperceptions, as a UNCA student I have some additional opinions of my own.

UNCA has always appealed to me as an open-minded, accepting community, yet I find myself ashamed to say I attend the same university as an individual who would submit comments for publication such as, "Why do we have such a person on our campus?"

This statement goes beyond athletic concern; it questions why an

international student, a great guy who diversifies this campus, mind you, is here at all.

If this was truly a letter of concern about athletic scholarships consuming too much of the budget, it should have been addressed to the athletic community at large, rather than a personal, direct assault on one individual. No one on this campus should ever be subject to such an attack.

Athletic criticism is one thing, but attacking Lassi's character behind the facade that his scholarship brings detrimental harm to the budget is appalling. Sports programs are part of most colleges in the United States.

Success comes and goes with seasons, and, in my opinion, if Ben F. was genuinely concerned about the team's well-being, he would do more good by encouraging the team to play hard, rather than singling out the player in the most pressured position in a public medium.

-Megan Dent, freshman and goalkeeper for the women's soccer team

Banner acted irresponsibly in publishing letter on Hurskainen

Dear Editor,

I am writing in regards to the now infamous "Soccer keeper drains resources in tough times, fails to be a team player" letter.

It would be easy to lay blame at the feet of the happily anonymous Ben F., but I think it would be missing the point. I gladly filled out a draft card in order to protect Ben's right to say whatever he chooses regardless of ignorance, shortsightedness or intent for malice. Allegations against *The Blue Banner* as being unfair with regard to athletic coverage are likewise off target.

The main problem stems from the handling and publishing of the letter, responsibility for which is at the editors' feet. The precedent set

by this incident is concerning. The defense of publishing the letter as an attack on the "role" an athlete plays and not the athlete as a student, peer or person is weak and dishonest at best. Student athletes (note the hyphen) are not operating on another plane separate from their fellow students, regardless of finances. Neither does any other student role separate them from being a student.

This does not preclude group, team or student government policies from criticism. The Letter to the Editor should have no doubt been published had it dealt with soccer players in general, athletic policies in general, or the like.

While at UNC Asheville as a student researcher in the chemistry department, I certainly did not con-

sistently perform at the optimum despite being supported by student fees and institutional scholarship monies. The chemistry faculty could certainly vouch for it! But I like to think the chemistry faculty would also report I matured as a person and scientist through my missteps and letdowns. Public criticism of my individual performance as a researcher, no doubt a criticizable role by your presented logic, would have surely stunted my growth as a researcher, student, and person.

An editor is certainly within his or her right to only act as "editor" and publish without concern for others. But, sometimes in life we are presented with challenges that allow us to reach above the "roles" we play in life. In these moments

we have the capacity to mend, mediate, and heal if we choose to do so. It is rarely the easy, popular, or profitable choice.

Opportunities for conflict mediation were clearly available to the editors, but were sadly passed by. I hope more discernment on the part of the editors, as humans, will be used in the future.

The case of this controversy should be viewed by the editors, faculty, alumni and the student population as a teachable moment. Because if we cannot learn to be human within our "roles" as students, we are surely missing one of the main goals of an undergraduate education.

-Jacob Nix, class of 2008